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Olympic Hurdles, Trials, Losses and Wins

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As we go into the final laps of the long race to the Closing Ceremonies, here are five things worth reading (actually, four to read and one to watch) to put issues related to the Olympics (albeit sometimes vaguely) into novel perspectives.

1) Warren Cohen, a leading scholar of U.S.-China relations has a [smart essay](#) on the truthdig site that compares and contrasts the frameworks and details of books on the PRC by journalists, Philip Pan's *Out of Mao's Shadow* and Joshua Kurlantzick's *China's Charm Offensive*.

2) Speaking of Kurlantzick, whose book came out some time ago, he's got an interesting [new piece](#) out that looks at how differently some villagers view the Games than do urbanites of the sort that are usually the focus on Western media reports on "Chinese" attitudes toward the Olympics.

3) The always valuable Roland Soong site has an excellent [collage of translation](#) that bring to light the varied ways that Chinese athletic triumphs and tragedies are being discussed—and on the different reactions over time to Olympic successes by people with Chinese ancestral ties and sometimes PRC backgrounds who win or help win medals for other countries.

4) On the lighter side, Joel Stein offers readers of *Time* magazine some [provocative suggestions](#) on improving the Olympics. Here's a sample: "The first step is to eliminate all but one medal event per sport. You know why Michael Phelps won eight medals? Because they were all for doing the same thing. Turns out, he can swim fast when he does two laps and four laps—and when he's alone and when three other Americans go after him! You want multiple medals, do multiple sports. Phelps only gets two medals if he's the fastest swimmer and the best Taekwandoist."

5) What would a China Beat top five round-up be without a mention of a "Sexy Beijing" webisode? So here's a final suggestion of a [place to turn](#), which lets you watch our favorite bilingual female Beijing-based broadcaster talking to experts and people on the street about Olympic issues associated with sports and gender.